

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR ORDERING A LABORATORY TEST FOR A PATIENT AND OBTAINING RESULTS THEREOF

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] _____ The present invention relates, in general, to a computer method and system for ordering a test and obtaining results thereof. More particularly, this invention relates to a method and system for ordering laboratory tests for a patient and obtaining test results over the Internet.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] _____ In the field of laboratory testing, medical professionals request laboratory tests on behalf of their patients as an important part of the delivery of medical services. A biological sample (e.g., blood, urine, culture, etc.) is taken from the patient by the medical professional. That biological sample is often transported to an independent laboratory, which is requested to conduct a specified test on the biological sample. The results of the test are then communicated by the laboratory to the medical professional. In such a process, steps should be taken to maintain patient confidentiality, handle the biological samples efficiently, and report test results accurately. Over the years, attempts have been made to streamline the process, to reduce costs, and to minimize the paperwork associated with laboratory testing of biological samples. ~~The Internet provides new opportunities for the development of improved systems for ordering laboratory tests and obtaining test results.~~

[0003] _____ The Internet includes a vast number of computers and computer networks that are interconnected through communications links. The interconnected computers exchange information using various services, such as electronic mail, Gopher, and the World Wide Web (WWW). The WWW service allows a server computer system (i.e., Web server or Web site) to send graphical Web pages of information to a remote client computer. The remote client computer can then display the Web pages. Each resource (e.g., computer or Web page) of the WWW is uniquely identifiable by a Uniform Resource Locator (URL). To view a specific Web page, a client computer specifies the

URL for that Web page in a request (e.g., a Hyper-Text Transfer Protocol (HTTP) request). The request is forwarded to the Web server that supports that Web page. When that Web server receives the request, it sends that Web page to the client computer. When the client computer receives that Web page, it typically displays the Web page using a browser. A browser is a special-purpose application program that affects the requesting of Web pages and the displaying of Web pages.

[0004] _____ Web pages are typically defined using Hyper-Text Markup Language (HTML). HTML provides a standard set of tags that define how a Web page is to be displayed. When a user indicates to the browser to display a Web page, the browser sends a request to the server computer system to transfer to the client computer an HTML document that defines the Web page. When the requested HTML document is received by the client computer, the browser displays the Web page as defined by the HTML document. The HTML document contains various tags that control the displaying of text, graphics, controls, and other features. The HTML document may contain URLs of other Web pages available on that server computer system or other server computer systems.

[0005] _____ The World Wide Web is especially conducive to conducting electronic commerce. Many Web servers have been developed through which vendors can advertise and sell products. The products can include items (e.g., music) that are delivered electronically to the purchaser over the Internet and items (e.g., books) that are delivered through conventional distribution channels (e.g., a common carrier). A server computer system may provide an electronic version of a catalog that lists the items that are available. A user, who is a potential purchaser, may browse through the catalog using a browser and select various items that are to be purchased. When the user has selected the items to be purchased, the server computer system then prompts the user for information to complete the ordering of the items. This purchaser-specific order information may include the purchaser's name, the purchaser's credit card number, and a shipping address for the order. The server computer system then typically confirms the order by sending a confirming Web page to the client computer system and schedules shipment of the items.

[0006] _____ ~~There remains a need for an improved method and system for ordering a~~